

FINCHAMPSTEAD PARISH CIRCULAR WALK 2 – SIMON’S WOOD

Approx. 4 miles / 6.5km - follow the orange and white FPC waymarkers

Start in Simon’s Wood car park (National Trust) **1**. Leave the car park via the access road onto Wellingtonia Avenue **2** and turn left along the footpath towards Crowthorne (there is an alternative track laid out and waymarked behind the line of trees if you prefer to avoid the roadside).

At the Restricted Byway sign turn right and cross the road onto Drift Lane with “Barn End” sign on your left. Follow the track with Beech and Sweet Chestnut woodland on the left and a wooden fence on the right.

Go past the entrance to a footpath on your right (old white Berkshire CC Sign) and continue about 30 yards to the signpost for Footpath 20 where you turn left between three white-topped posts into the woodland.

The main footpath is clear enough with a post and rail fence alongside and waymarkers. After about 400 yards you reach the edge of the wood and cross over a ditch before following the fence line downhill **3**.

At this point you leave Finchampstead Parish and enter Sandhurst (part of Bracknell Forest Borough).

Follow the path with post and rail fences on both sides **4** initially through grassland and then with a Pine wood on the left. A short stretch is eroded and muddy when wet but enterprising walkers have created an alternative rough track alongside through the trees. After another 400 yards the path turns sharply left into the woodland (marked Coalpit Copse on an OS Explorer Map) where there are masses of Bluebells in the spring, and continues on to Ambarrow Lane.

On reaching the Lane, turn left passing Ambarrow Lodge and cross over when the road straightens in front of Ambarrow Farm. After about 100 yards there is a kissing gate on the right slightly set back from the roadside. Go through this and follow the footpath signed to Horseshoe Lake **5**. Keep to the field edge, which is initially marshy, passing Ambarrow Farmhouse on your right and continue across the fields through 3 further kissing gates onto Lower Sandhurst Road.

Cross the road and the adjacent bridle path and go through the kissing gate into Horseshoe Lake Country Park **6**.

- If a slightly longer walk is preferred, go straight ahead and continue along the path round the Eastern end of the lake. This route leads to the Outdoor Pursuits Centre **7** which provides sailing, canoeing and dragon boating courses and has a café which is open during the summer months. Go on alongside the car park and through the woods to reach the Blackwater Valley Path where you turn right and walk alongside the river to eventually rejoin the main walk.

The main walk continues along the north side of Horseshoe Lake following the well-made path to the right with the Lake on your left hand side. After about 300 yards you reach a kissing gate. Go through the gate and continue along the path with fields and farm buildings on the right **8**.

When you reach a sign for Moor Green Lakes follow the path round to the left and continue to another kissing gate onto the Blackwater Valley Path **9**. Turn right past the entrance to a private bird hide and follow the wide path along the river bank. (The longer walk rejoins at this point.)

After about 400 yards you will come to a wooden bird hide on the right **10** which offers good views over Moor Green Lakes Nature Reserve. Continue along the river bank past a bridge which carries a bridleway across the river from Yateley. The path is now divided by a fence with the bridleway on the left and footpath on the right **11**.

At the next junction, leave the Blackwater Valley Path and turn north onto Footpath 17A which runs parallel to the bridleway along the western end of Moor Green Lakes. On the left hand side are the Manor Farm gravel extraction pits which are already being planted with reed-beds as part of their restoration **12**.

Continue over a footbridge keeping to the right hand path and continue past bird-feeders with the Lakes on your right **13** until you reach a small car park.

Turn right opposite Blackwater View onto Lower Sandhurst Road and follow the road for about 600 yards until you reach Drift Lane on the left between Broomfield House and Moor Green House. This is a Restricted Byway (signed on the right side of the road).

Go gradually uphill past Old Thatch Cottage until the path turns to the right at the lower entrance to Finchampstead Ridges (another National Trust property) **14**. It is highly recommended to take one of the paths through the Ridges as the scenery and views are worth the slightly steeper ascent – a short detour to the left from the gate will also allow you to visit Spout Pond. The main track follows the fence line on the right up the hill and passes a waymarker at the bottom of the fairly steep final slope. At the top of this are benches and fine views over the Blackwater Valley to Hampshire. A path then leads onwards through the trees towards the Road. When the Road comes into sight follow the narrow track to the right through heather and gorse bushes to reach Wellingtonia Avenue at a sign for Edge of the Hill and rejoin the main walk.

- Alternatively continue along Drift Lane for about 800 yards until at the top of the hill you reach the junction with Footpath 20 taken on the outward journey. Either retrace your steps to Wellingtonia Avenue and the car park or turn left after 50 yards onto Footpath 19 (signposted) and follow it with the board fence on the right hand side. The track bears right and comes out onto The Ridges/Wellingtonia Avenue corner by the sign for Edge of the Hill.

Crossing the road with care, and walk downhill along the footpath to the entrance to Simon's Wood car park. In the wood, about halfway down, there is a magnificent Beech tree which rivals the Wellingtonias in both height and girth.



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